

The President's Weekly Address

September 8, 2012

This week, we mark the 11th anniversary of the September 11 attacks. It's a time to remember the nearly 3,000 innocent men, women, and children we lost and the families that they left behind. It's a chance to honor the courage of the first-responders who risked their lives on that day and every day since. And it's an opportunity to give thanks for our men and women in uniform who have served and sacrificed—sometimes far from home—to keep our country safe.

This anniversary is about them. It's also a time to reflect on just how far we've come as a nation these past 11 years.

On that clear September morning, as America watched the towers fall and the Pentagon burn and the wreckage smoldering in a Pennsylvania field, we were filled with questions. Where had the attacks come from, and how would America respond? Would they fundamentally weaken the country we love? Would they change who we are?

The last decade has been a difficult one, but together, we have answered those questions and come back stronger as a nation.

We took the fight to Al Qaida, decimating their leadership, and put them on the path to defeat. And thanks to the courage and skill of our intelligence personnel and Armed Forces, Usama bin Laden will never threaten America again.

Instead of pulling back from the world, we've strengthened our alliances, while improving our security here at home. As Americans, we refuse to live in fear. Today, a new tower rises above the New York skyline. And our country is stronger, safer, and more respected in the world.

Instead of turning on each other, we resisted the temptation to give in to mistrust and suspicion. I've always said that America is at war with Al Qaida and its affiliates and we will never be at war with Islam or any other religion. We are the United States of America. Our freedom and diversity make us unique, and they will always be central to who we are as a nation.

Instead of changing who we are, the attacks have brought out the best in the American people. More than 5 million members of the 9/11 generation have worn America's uniform over the past decade, and we've seen an outpouring of good will towards our military, our veterans, and their families. Together, they've done everything we've asked of them. We've ended the war in Iraq and brought our troops home. We brought an end to the Taliban regime. We've trained Afghan security forces and forged a partnership with a new Afghan Government. And by the end of 2014, the transition in Afghanistan will be complete, and our war there will be over.

And finally, instead of turning inward with grief, we've honored the memory of those we lost by giving back to our communities, serving those in need, and reaffirming the values at the heart of who we are as a people. That's why we mark September 11 as a National Day of Service and Remembrance, because we are one American family. And we look out for each other, not just on the difficult days, but every day.

Eleven years later, that's the legacy of 9/11: the ability to say with confidence that no adversary and no act of terrorism can change who we are. We are Americans, and we will protect and preserve this country we love. On this solemn anniversary, let's remember those we lost, let us reaffirm the values they stood for, and let us keep moving forward as one Nation and one people.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 12:15 p.m. on September 5 in the Diplomatic Room at the White House for broadcast on September 8. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 7, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on September 8.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Weekly addresses.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Subjects: Afghanistan : Afghan military and security forces; Afghanistan : Former regime; Afghanistan : Relations with U.S.; Afghanistan : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Casualties; Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Service and dedication; Civil rights : Freedom of religion; Holidays and special observances : Patriot Day and National Day of Service and Remembrance; Iraq : U.S. and coalition forces, withdrawal; Terrorism : Al Qaida terrorist group; Terrorism : September 11, 2001, attacks.

DCPD Number: DCPD201200698.